

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 467. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 163 corresponds to Litir 467.

Nuair a bha a’ chlann agam òg, agus sinn a’ fuireach san Eilean Sgitheanach, bhithinn a’ dol gu tric don chròileagan còmhla riutha. Tha cuimhne agam air aon òran a ghabhamaid. Bha sinn a’ togail gach corraig, tè às dèidh a chèile, nuair a bha an t-òran seo ag iarraidh oirnn. Bha e a’ dol mar seo: “Calum corrag, Calum corrag, ca’ bheil thu? Tha mi seo, tha mi seo, ciamar a tha thu?”

An uair sin bha sinn a’ dol don dàrna corraig. “Fionnlagh fada, Fionnlagh fada, ca’ bheil thu? Tha mi seo, tha mi seo, ciamar a tha thu?” Tuigidh sibh nach robh sinn a’ bodraigeadh leis an tuiséal ghairmeach! Cha robh a h-uile duine ag aontachadh gur e *Fionnlagh fada* a th’ air a’ mheur as fhaide. Bha cuid a’ gabhail *Màiri fhada* oirre. No *gunna fada*. Ach bha a h-uile duine aig a’ chròileagan, aig an robh Gàidhlig, ag aontachadh mun chorraig air am bithear a’ gabhail *the ring finger* ann am Beurla – *mac an aba*.

Nise, sgrìobh mi beagan mu ainmean nan corragan, no nam meur, ann an Litir 37 anns a’ Ghearran 2000. Dh’aidich mi aig an àm nach robh fios agam cò às a thàinig an t-ainm *mac an aba*. Gu litreachail, tha e a’ ciallachadh “*the son of the abbot*”. Ach chan eil sin a’ dèanamh mòran cèill dhomh. Agus gach duine air an cuirinn a’ cheist, cha robh freagairt aca.

Ach o chionn ghoirid tha amharas agam gur dòcha gun tàinig mi tarsainn air an fhuasgladh. Agus, ma thàinig, ’s e **tuiteamas a bh’ ann**. Chan e sin a-mhàin ach cha robh mi ann an Alba aig an àm, ach ann an Èirinn. Agus tha am fuasgladh air leth sìmplidh.

Bha mi ann an ceann a tuath na h-Èireann. Chaidh mi a chèlidh air fear a tha air leth fiosrachail mun Ghaeilge a thathar, agus a bhathar, a’ bruidhinn ann an Aontram agus ann an **Eilean Reachrann** – *Rathlin Island* – eadar ceann a tuath na h-Èireann agus Alba. Is esan Brian MacLochlainn. Tha Gaeilge agus Gàidhlig aige, agus bha e eòlach air na daoine mu dheireadh ann an Reachrainn aig an robh an cànan.

Chruinnich Brian fiosrachadh air iomadach rud bho fhear Alex Morrison ann an Reachrainn. Bha Alex air leth fiosrachail. Mar eisimpleir, thug e seachad ceithir cheud ainm-àite nach robh clàraichte roimhe. Agus dh’innis e do Bhrian gu dè na h-ainmean a bh’ aca ann an Reachrainn airson nan corragan.

Nise, mus innis mi iad sin dhuibh, bu chòir a ràdh gun robh a’ Ghaeilge ann an Reachrainn, agus air tìr-mòr Aontraim, car coltach ann an dòighean ri Gàidhlig na h-Alba. Mar eisimpleir, bhiodh *mh* no *bh* ro fhuaimreag leathann a’ dèanamh “v” seach “w” – mar *Ballyvaddy* no Baile a’ Mhadaidh. Bha an “u” car coltach ris a “u” ann an Gàidhlig.

Chanadh iad “cur” seach “cur” agus “rud” seach “rud”. Chanadh iad “deas” an àite “deas”. Agus chleachdadh iad “cha” an àite “nì” ann an gnìomhairean àicheil.

Co-dhiù, air ais do na corragan, no na meuran. Chanadh Alex Morrison *méar fada* ris a’ chorraig as fhaide. Agus ’s e na bh’ aige air a *ring finger* – *mac an fhada*. Mac a’ mheòir fhada. Mac an fhada. Gu litreachail “*the son of the long finger*” no “*the smaller one next to the long finger*”. Tha sin a’ dèanamh ciall, nach eil?

Saoil an do dh’atharraich *mac an fhada* ann an Alba gu *mac an aba*? Ma tha fiosrachadh agaibh air a’ chùis, bu math leam cluinntinn bhuaibh. Mar sin leibh an-dràsta.

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Faclan na Litreach: meur, corrag: *finger*; Antram: *Antrim*.

Abairtean na Litreach: san Eilean Sgitheanach: *on the Isle of Skye*; bhithinn a’ dol gu tric don chròileagan còmhla riutha: *I would often go to the cròileagan (pre-school Gaelic playgroup) with them*; aon òran a ghabhamaid: *one song we would sing*; bha sinn a’ togail gach corraig, tè às dèidh a chèile: *we were raising each finger, one after the other*; nuair a bha an t-òran seo ag iarraidh oirnn: *when this song was asking/wanting us to*; nach robh sinn a’ bodraigeadh leis an tuiseal ghairmeach: *that we weren’t bothering with the vocative case*; air am bithear a’ gabhail: *which is called*; gu litreachail: *literally*; mòran cèill: *much sense*; gach duine air an cuirinn a’ cheist: *every person I asked*; gur dòcha gun tàinig mi tarsainn air an fhuasgladh: *that perhaps I came across the solution*; chan e sin a-mhàin: *not only that*; air leth sìmplidh: *very simple*; ceann a tuath na h-Èireann: *the north of Ireland*; chaidh mi a chèilidh air X: *I went to visit X*; nach robh clàraichte roimhe: *that were not previously recorded*; mus innis mi iad sin dhuibh: *before I tell you them*; ro fhuaimreag leathann: *before a broad vowel*; ann an gnìomhairean àicheil: *in [the] negative [forms of] verbs [eg they would say cha robh instead of ní raibh]*; chanadh X *méar fada* ris a’ chorraig as fhaide: *X would call the longest finger the méar [meur] fada*; saoil an do dh’atharraich *mac an fhada* ann an Alba gu *mac an aba*?: *do you reckon mac an fhada changed in Scotland to mac an aba?*; bu math leam cluinntinn bhuaibh: *I’d like to hear from you*; mar sin leibh an-dràsta: *cheerio just now*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Eilean Reachrann:** *Rathlin Island. Brian MacLochlainn tells me that in local usage the island was called Reachraidh in Gaelic. But its genitive form is Reachrann and its dative form is Reachrainn. Thus we would say tha Reachraidh na eilean beag; cha robh mi riamh ann an Reachrainn and tha Eilean Reachrann letheach-slighe eadar Èirinn is Alba. Think of Lewis as an example. Mostly people talk about Leòdhas (bha mi ann an Leòdhas) and the dative is identical to the nominative form. But we say bha mi ann an Eilean Leòdhais, using the (slenderised) genitive form after Eilean (we are saying the Isle of Lewis). Another example you will be familiar with is Barra – bha mi ann am Barraigh but bha mi ann an Eilean Bharraigh. Here, as the word is already slender, it is lenition that acts as the genitive marker.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **’s e tuiteamas a bh’ ann:** *it was a chance occurrence.*

* Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig